

# Roanoke River

## *National Wildlife Refuge*



photo: USFWS



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### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1989.
- Acres: 17,500.
- Located in Bertie County, NC.
- Other management: conservation easements—84 totaling 2,439 acres in 19 counties and two satellites totaling 174 acres.
- Location: the refuge consists of five different tracts of land along 70 miles of the Roanoke River and two distant satellite tracts in other river basins. The Roanoke River tracts are scattered from Hamilton, NC to the mouth of the river or western Albemarle Sound. Headquarters are in Windsor, NC.

### Natural History

- Refuge lands, on the Atlantic Coastal Plain, are part of an extensive bottomland hardwood forest supported by wehadkee and chewacla soils. The forests consist of mixed hardwood flats and ridges, cypress/tupelo sloughs and black and brown water streams.
- Concentrations of wintering waterfowl, nesting ducks, raptors, osprey and neo-tropical migrants are common. The largest inland heron rookery in North Carolina is on refuge.
- The endangered shortnose sturgeon is found in refuge habitat of lower river reach.
- Bald eagles nest on adjacent lands. River corridor is wintering area for bald eagles.
- Bottomland hardwood forest 9,500 acres, cypress/tupelo swamp 8,000 acres.

### Financial Impact of Refuge

- Six-person staff.
- 4,000 visitors annually (public use program is in early development stage through private partnerships).

- Current budget (FY 98) \$456,000.

### Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat for migratory waterfowl, neo-tropical migrants and other birds.
- Provide migrating, spawning and nursery habitat for anadromous fish; i.e. blueback herring, alewife, hickory shad and striped bass.
- Enhance and protect forested wetlands consisting of bottomland hardwoods and swamps.
- To protect and manage for endangered and threatened wildlife.
- Provide recreation and environmental education for the public.

### Management tools

- Water management for wintering and nesting waterfowl, wading bird rookeries and anadromous fish nurseries.
- Wetland restoration.
- Bottomland hardwood management.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious plants.
- Deer management with public hunting.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.

### Partnerships

- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.
- Partnership for The Sounds.
- The Nature Conservancy.
- Georgia-Pacific.
- VA/NC Power.
- National Marine Fisheries Service.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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## Public Use Opportunities

- Trails.
- Fishing.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Hunting.

## Calendar of Events

**April-May:** turkey hunt.

**May:** Migratory Bird Day.

**September-October:** archery/  
muzzleloader deer hunts.

**October:** National Wildlife  
Refuge Week.

**October-November:** deer hunts.

**October-December:** small  
game hunts.

**November-December:** waterfowl  
hunts.

## Questions and Answers

*When is something going to be done  
with the flows on the river?*

Flows are managed by the USACOE and VA/NC Power. The two dams operated by VA/NC Power are scheduled for relicensing in 2001. Asynchronous, seasonal flows in downriver habitats: i.e. refuge and 45,000 acres of other protected lands is an issue being addressed in this relicensing process. However, the real issue of “controlled flooding” downriver can only be addressed through partnerships with USACOE—which has ultimate control over downriver flows.

*Is camping allowed?*

Primitive camping is only permitted in conjunction with refuge deer hunts due to safety concerns with river navigation at dusk and dawn.

*What are hunting conditions like?  
i.e. refuge flooded,  
animal sightings, etc.*

Refuge staff will have this information. Answers depend on season and river flows which can abruptly change.

*Where can one go on the refuge for  
good birding?*

The natural river levees and trails off from HWY 13/17 offer good birding opportunities in bottomland hardwood forests. There are designated parking areas adjacent to HWY 13/17 with nearby access to unmarked trails. All sites, except HWY 13/17, require a boat.

*Hunt opportunities: permit  
required? How does one get a  
permit?*

Special hunt permits are required to hunt on refuge lands. Permits are issued by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Conservation. Applications may be submitted through any one of the approximately 1,200 Licence Agents i.e. Wal-mart, most sporting goods stores, K-mart etc..., in the state. Application procedures and hunt dates are located in the “Regulations Digest” annually published by the NCWRC. Out-of-state hunters who are unable to get to a NCWRC License Agent can write to:

Hunt Permit Applications  
Division of Wildlife Management  
512 N. Salisbury Street  
Raleigh, NC 27604-1188

and obtain an application form.  
Photo copies of the application form  
are acceptable.